

Congressman Secures Language in Defense Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2010 That Will Prevent the Pentagon from Privatizing Nearly 6,000 Civilian & Military Jobs

Washington, DC - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today secured the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense's approval of a provision he helped author as part of the fiscal year 2010 funding bill that would prevent the Pentagon from moving forward with its plan to potentially privatize nearly 6,000 civilian and military jobs, including at least 531 jobs at West Point.

The provision blocks a Pentagon decision made earlier this year to proceed with a plan initiated during the Bush administration that sought to privatize hundreds of federal civilian jobs at West Point. Additionally, the measure prevents all other privatization efforts, known as Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-76 privatization reviews, from being carried out. According to a Pentagon document, 3,575 civilian jobs and 2,394 military jobs are in jeopardy of being privatized. The provision Hinchey helped draft would prevent that from happening.

"By preventing the privatization of long-standing government jobs at West Point and elsewhere we are protecting workers from having their jobs downgraded with lower pay and less benefits," Hinchey said. "We cannot allow the Pentagon to carry forward a terrible policy utilized by the Bush administration to chip away at the rights and benefits of thousands of civilian and military employees. Our military academies and installations serve as a great source of pride and we should not turn our back on the men and women who have long held jobs there with great distinction. This privatization plan was wasteful and discriminatory and I am very grateful we were able to secure language today that would block it."

Congressman John Hall (D-NY), who worked with Hinchey to reverse the decision to privatize government jobs at West Point, said, "I thank Congressman Hinchey for his continued efforts and leadership fighting this illegal and unmerited privatization plan. Allowing the privatization of innately government jobs at West Point would deal a painful blow to the West Point community. The A76 study that led to the privatization of West Point jobs has been inherently flawed, skewed, and discriminatory since its inception. Privatization reviews were commissioned by the Bush administration as part of an ideological effort to outsource government jobs to private companies. Congress has since rightfully outlawed these privatization reviews. Furthermore, outsourcing West Point's government jobs to a private company will actually end up costing the taxpayers more money than it would to keep the jobs in the government. West Point employees and the West Point community should not suffer because of an illegal, faulty holdover from the

Bush administration."

Earlier this year, Congress passed legislation that President Obama subsequently signed into law that bars any future privatization studies. Since the West Point study and others were already underway, government jobs at the academy and elsewhere were still eligible to be privatized. Hinchey worked closely with House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense Chairman John Murtha to ensure the inclusion of the provision blocking the privatization of government jobs.

In March, the Department of Defense announced its decision to privatize 394 operations and maintenance jobs at West Point that have long been held by government employees. The Department of Defense revealed it was planning to outsource West Point government jobs to a private company from Georgia. Another effort to privatize an additional 137 custodial jobs at West Point was initially rejected, but is under review. Prior to the Pentagon's initial decision on whether to privatize jobs at West Point, Hinchey and Hall, who are both members of the West Point Board of Visitors, wrote a letter to Defense Secretary Robert Gates, urging him to cancel the A-76 study that resulted in the decision to privatize the West Point jobs. That study was commissioned during the Bush administration as a way to eliminate jobs at West Point that have long been held by government workers and outsource them to private companies.

Hinchey and Hall have repeatedly noted that the A-76 process has been found by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to be ineffective and discriminatory against women, minorities, and older workers.

While there are several legislative steps that the bill needs to go through before the provision blocking the privatization of government jobs becomes law, securing the approval of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee is considered the first and most critical part of the process.